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## The enchanting island of Boracay

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THE ENCHANTING ISLAND OF BORACAY



JUST seven kilometers long and less than a kilometer wide at its narrowest point, Boracay island is a tropical paradise located in Malay, Aklan, Western Visayas. Famous for its powdery white sands and pristine blue waters, it was chosen the Best Overall Island in the World by Travel+Leisure Magazine in 2012.

In 2015, Boracay was named as the Best Beach in Asia by Trip Advisor's Travelers' Choice Awards for Islands. In the same year, it was also chosen as one of the 20 Most Beautiful Beaches in the World by the readers of Conde Nast Traveler and one of the 100 Most Beautiful Beaches in the World by CNN.

### Alluring beaches

All these recognitions stemmed from the beaches of Boracay. The best and most famous beach in Boracay is the White Beach, a four-kilometer, postcard-perfect stretch of sand lined from one end to the other with hotels, restaurants, bars, and dive shops. It is composed of three sections. The northernmost section or Station 1, which has the widest beachfront and the place for the best (and most expensive) resorts and hotels. The center of White Beach is the Station 2 where people come to eat, shop and party. The quieter area is the Station 3.

On the eastern side of the island opposite White Beach is Bulabog Beach which has large waves and strong winds year round. This beach is ideal for windsurfing and kiteboarding. Bulabog Beach is considered Asia's top kitesurf destination.

### **Accommodation and food**

Whichever side of the island one chooses to stay, there's a room for every type of traveler in Boracay. Budget accommodation starts at around P400 a night and can go all the way to P13,500. Before deciding on where to stay, make sure to avail of the excellent deals that several travel agencies offer. There are resorts that cater to the needs of families and groups of friends.

Since Boracay welcomes tourists from different parts of the world, a wide variety of cuisines are available like Chinese, Indian, American, Mexican, French, Italian, Swiss—even Moroccan food. Of course, seafood abounds in this part of the world.

### **Fun activities**

This island paradise offers a lot of breathtaking activities waiting for tourists. Boracay has around 25 dive sites that cater to all levels of experience. One can go parasailing or just take a paraw (native outrigger boat) for a tour of the island. Waterskiing or cliff diving activities are also available.

For a family activities, surfing, swimming and diving are prevalent in the area. Family members can also enjoy playing tennis, beach volleyball, snorkeling, and viewing Boracay's coral reefs. Other adventurous activities are glass-bottom vessel driving, yachting, rainforest climbing, bike riding and mountain climbing.

### **Relaxing treat**

After all the fun activities, indulge in a luxurious massage right on the beach or at one of the spas in Boracay. Enjoy a healthy fruitshake after and then shop for shell jewelry. When the sun goes down, visit one of the Boracay island's bars for a taste of its unique nightlife.

### **When to visit**

The waters of White Beach are calm during Amihan season (November to May), tourism is at its peak during these months when the northeastern winds blow. Conditions reverse during the rainy season, when the Habagat or monsoon winds blow.

### Looking back

But before it came to what it is today, Boracay was originally home to the Ati people. It was an inhabited place before the Spaniards came to the Philippines. Couple Sofia Gonzales Tirol and her husband Lamberto Hontiveros Tirol, a town judge on nearby Panay Island took ownership of substantial properties on the island around 1900 and planted coconuts, fruit trees, and greenery on the island. Others followed the Tirols, and development of the island gradually spread.

On April 25, 1956, Aklan became an independent province and Boracay began to develop as a resort. Tourism came to the island beginning the '70s. In the 1980s, the island became popular as a budget destination among backpackers. By 1990s, it was acclaimed as the best in the world.

### What's in a name

According to one local story, Boracay is derived from the local word "borac" which means white cotton with characteristics close to the color and texture of Boracay's white, sugary, and powdery sand. Another credits the name to local words "bora," meaning bubbles, and "bocay" meaning white. Another version dating back to the Spanish time says the name is derived from "sagay," the word for shell, and "boray," the word for seed.

### Preserving Boracay

Has Boracay changed? Just like any other natural resources, Boracay is subject to exploitation and degradation due to poor maintenance and waste management not only by business establishments but also by visitors. Overdevelopment is slowly killing its natural, enchanting magic. Sadly, property experts say the place lacks masterplanning.

There are various organizations formed to implement ways to preserve Boracay but if all the residents of Boracay and the visitors enjoying Boracay would help in preserving it, the beautiful sunset of Boracay would have better days in every sunrise in Boracay.



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